

Permanent Record

(Confidential Version)

by Edward Snowden

with a new Foreword by John Kendall Hawkins



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Foreword

Published in September 2019, Edward Snowden's memoir, *Permanent Record* immediately shot to the *NYT* bestseller list, receiving well-deserved critical and popular acclaim, and, in my estimation, it would have won the much-coveted Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction the following year. It is a riveting, well-written, and deftly edited document. It details a Surveillance State apparatus so intrusive and comprehensive, utilizing the Internet and piggy-backing on corporate media (Google, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) database collections and algorithms, that Snowden shows how catastrophic that apparatus is to the future (and past) of human privacy and how it makes governmental transparency impossible, thereby destroying democratic institutions. Snowden's revelation about the previously untold workings of the NSA and CIA were a wet dream candidate for Julian Assange's Wikileaks publication, although, as Snowden relays in the memoir, he chose in the end not to dump at Wikileaks but to seek out journalists to vet his information and spread the word through the mainstream media (MSM).

Yes, *Permanent Record* was well on its way to the status of whistleblowing classic, akin to Daniel Ellsberg's Nixon era bombshell, *The Pentagon Papers*. But, as they say, something happened on the way to the quorum forum: The State. In December 2019, a US court ordered the profits of the sales for *Permanent Record* seized, reasoning that Snowden had violated nondisclosure agreements with the NSA and CIA. In other words, he had not submitted the book for the long process of review and redaction prior to open publication. [The court finding](#) went further,

Additionally, and while subject to the Secrecy Agreement, Snowden has made public remarks at various events including a "TED" conference, an internet security trade fair ("it-sa"), the College of William & Mary, and Dalhousie University.

The government then seized in excess of \$5.2 million Snowden received for the book and speeches he delivered. Following the ruling, Snowden tweeted to the Twittersphere,

The government may steal a dollar, but it cannot erase the idea that earned it ... I wrote this book for you, and I hope the government's ruthless desperation to prevent its publication only inspires you read it – and then gift it to another.

But, Snowden, has not suffered on the financial front since settling in Russia. His internet-based speeches and writings have earned him more than \$8 million in 2020 alone, according to [one probably unreliable source](#). So, take that, the Goss tells Uncle Sam.

In early 2021, as if to tweak the government's Pinocchio-length appendage, Snowden released a Young Readers Edition (YRE) of *Permanent Record*. It is in all essence the same memoir as the "adult" version – minus 100 pages. The language is the same. The story is the same. But there are pseudo-redactions – along with some excellent copy-editing to reduce 'lag' for young readers, sections that got him in trouble with the government have been excised. In the YRE, your child won't read two major chapters of the adult version, "Homo Contractus," which may be off-putting to an [identity-searching teen](#), and "The Tunnel" (see the previous comment). Also, the chapter, "The Boy," which mentions some naughty things Snowden, and his co-workers, got up to -- spying on love interests and sharing nudies of Ayn Rand -- in a section called [LOVEINT](#) has been circumspectly circumsised. Not because of

the sex, of which there is not enough, but because the program he describes is illegal and impossible and the government has disavowed any knowledge of its existence.

Feeling frisky, and with nothing better to do in my dotage, I decided to ixnay the adult version and the YRE and produce a Permanent Record: Confidential Version (PRCV). Here, I recover and reconstruct some of the lost 100 pages, judiciously (leaving out the times the doorknob broke, as the Bard from Duluth would say) editing my findings down to about 40 pages, including what I hope will come across as merely modest pages of notes and remarks on topic that has proven larger than any one life. So, if a potential reader is strapped for time, especially during this holiday season, she or he or s/he may wish to cut to the chase scenes and read only the three missing chapters alluded to above, plus some bits and pieces I scratch my scroti over in ponderment of the editorial decision-making process involved, such as Ed's Mayflower pride and deletion of his slaver's heritage. Other than that...

Of the missing material, "Homo Contractus" is probably the most significant cut. Here Snowden details the degree of corruption that has beset the Military-Industrial relationship that Ike warned us about all those years ago. Snowden talks about humbly going for a techie job interview, expecting decent wages, only to be prodded by the hiring gent to seek more salary (the agent gets a cut). He describes ostensible working for a computer company – Dell – when he is actually using it as cover while he spies for the CIA. And, in general, he paints a grimly entrenched system of contracting-out of government services to private enterprises (owned and operated by newly "retired" government employees with top secret clearances) who do things in the world on behalf of and *paid for* by Americans without their knowledge of consent, in order to get around public accountability. It's the privatisation of democracy. And if you don't like it, you can suck their Kochs.

Ultimately, and preferably, the reader will opt to read Snowden's seminal whistleblowing memoir that is unique and deeply important to the future of our species, and cries out for us, especially the youngsters of the Ice Station Zzzz generation, to stop our mess before it's too late. *Permanent Record* is widely available, despite the gubbo's shenanigans with the profits, including online at the marvellous electronic public library known as the Internet Archive. [Here](#) is the Adult version without expurgation. Put it on your Fuck It list. And read it.

Be seeing you, as Patrick "I'm Not a Number I'm a Free Man" McGoohan used to say in the dystopic cult hit series from the 70s, *The Prisoner*.

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My review of Permanent Record is [here](#).

My review of YRE is [here](#).

Preface

[J]ust another young technologist out to build what I was sure would be a better world.

My career in the American Intelligence Community (IC) only lasted a short seven years, which I'm surprised to realize is just one year longer than the time I've spent since in exile in a country that wasn't my choice. During that seven year stint, however, I participated in the most significant change in the history of American espionage—the change from the targeted surveillance of individuals to the mass surveillance of entire populations. I helped make it technologically feasible for a single government to collect all the world's digital communications, store them for ages, and search through them at will.

After 9/11, the IC was racked with guilt for failing to protect America, for letting the most devastating and destructive attack on the country since Pearl Harbor occur on its watch. In response, its leaders sought to build a system that would prevent them from being caught off guard ever again. At its foundation was to be technology, a foreign thing to their army of political science majors and masters of business administration. The doors to the most secretive intelligence agencies were flung wide open to young technologists like myself. And so the geek inherited the earth.

If I knew anything back then, I knew computers, so I rose quickly. At twenty-two, I got my first top secret clearance from the NSA, for a position at the very bottom of the org chart. Less than a year later, I was at the CIA, as a systems engineer with sprawling access to some of the most sensitive networks on the planet. The only adult supervision was a guy who spent his shifts reading paperbacks by Robert Ludlum and Tom Clancy. The agencies were breaking all of their own rules in their quest to hire technical talent. They'd normally never hire anybody without a bachelor's degree, or later at least an associate's, neither of which I had. By all rights, I should never have even been let into the building.

From 2007 to 2009, I was stationed at the US Embassy in Geneva as one of the rare technologists deployed under diplomatic cover, tasked with bringing the CIA into the future by bringing its European stations online, digitizing and automating the network by which the US government spied. My generation did more than reengineer the work of intelligence; we entirely redefined what intelligence was. For us, it was not about clandestine meetings or dead drops, but about data.

By age twenty-six, I was a nominal employee of Dell, but once again working for the NSA. Contracting had become my cover, as it was for nearly all the tech-inclined spies of my cohort. I was sent to Japan, where I helped to design what amounted to the agency's global backup—a massive covert network that ensured that even if the NSA's headquarters was reduced to ash in a nuclear blast, no data would ever be lost. At the time, I didn't realize that engineering a system that would keep a permanent record of everyone's life was a tragic mistake.

I came back to the States at age twenty-eight, and received a stratospheric promotion to the technical liaison team handling Dell's relationship with the CIA. My job was to sit down with

the heads of the technical divisions of the CIA in order to design and sell the solution to any problem that they could imagine. My team helped the agency build a new type of computing architecture—a “cloud,” the first technology that enabled every agent, no matter where they were physically located, to access and search any data they needed, no matter the distance.

In sum, a job managing and connecting the flow of intelligence gave way to a job figuring out how to store it forever, which in turn gave way to a job making sure it was universally available and searchable. These projects came into focus for me in Hawaii, where I moved to take a new contract with the NSA at the age of twenty-nine. Up until then, I’d been laboring under the doctrine of Need to Know, unable to understand the cumulative purpose behind my specialized, compartmentalized tasks. It was only in paradise that I was finally in a position to see how all my work fit together, meshing like the gears of a giant machine to form a system of global mass surveillance.

Deep in a tunnel under a pineapple field—a subterranean Pearl Harbor—era former airplane factory—I sat at a terminal from which I had practically unlimited access to the communications of nearly every man, woman, and child on earth who’d ever dialed a phone or touched a computer. Among those people were about 320 million of my fellow American citizens, who in the regular conduct of their everyday lives were being surveilled in gross contravention of not just the Constitution of the United States, but the basic values of any free society.

The reason you’re reading this book is that I did a dangerous thing for a man in my position: I decided to tell the truth. I collected internal IC documents that gave evidence of the US government’s lawbreaking and turned them over to journalists, who vetted and published them to a scandalized world. This book is about what led up to that decision, the moral and ethical principles that informed it, and how they came to be—which means that it’s also about my life.

What makes a life? More than what we say; more, even, than what we do. A life is also what we love, and what we believe in. For me, what I love and believe in the most is connection, human connection, and the technologies by which that is achieved. Those technologies include books, of course. But for my generation, connection has largely meant the Internet.

Before you recoil, knowing well the toxic madness that infests that hive in our time, understand that for me, when I came to know it, the Internet was a very different thing. It was a friend, and a parent. It was a community without border or limit, one voice and millions, a common frontier that had been settled but not exploited by diverse tribes living amicably enough side by side, each member of which was free to choose their own name and history and customs. Everyone wore masks, and yet this culture of anonymity-through-polyonymy produced more truth than falsehood, because it was creative and cooperative rather than commercial and competitive. Certainly, there was conflict, but it was outweighed by goodwill and good feelings—the true pioneering spirit.

You will understand, then, when I say that the Internet of today is unrecognizable. It’s worth noting that this change has been a conscious choice, the result of a systematic effort on the part of a privileged few. The early rush to turn commerce into e-commerce quickly led to a bubble, and then, just after the turn of the millennium, to a collapse. After that, companies realized that people who went online were far less interested in spending than in sharing, and

that the human connection the Internet made possible could be monetized. If most of what people wanted to do online was to be able to tell their family, friends, and strangers what they were up to, and to be told what their family, friends, and strangers were up to in return, then all companies had to do was figure out how to put themselves in the middle of those social exchanges and turn them into profit.

This was the beginning of surveillance capitalism, and the end of the Internet as I knew it.

Now, it was the creative Web that collapsed, as countless beautiful, difficult, individualistic websites were shuttered. The promise of convenience led people to exchange their personal sites—which demanded constant and laborious upkeep—for a Facebook page and a Gmail account. The appearance of ownership was easy to mistake for the reality of it. Few of us understood it at the time, but none of the things that we'd go on to share would belong to us anymore. The successors to the e-commerce companies that had failed because they couldn't find anything we were interested in buying now had a new product to sell.

That new product was Us.

Our attention, our activities, our locations, our desires—everything about us that we revealed, knowingly or not, was being surveilled and sold in secret, so as to delay the inevitable feeling of violation that is, for most of us, coming only now. And this surveillance would go on to be actively encouraged, and even funded by an army of governments greedy for the vast volume of intelligence they would gain. Aside from log-ins and financial transactions, hardly any online communications were encrypted in the early twenty-aughts, which meant that in many cases governments didn't even need to bother approaching the companies in order to know what their customers were doing. They could just spy on the world without telling a soul.

The American government, in total disregard of its founding charter, fell victim to precisely this temptation, and once it had tasted the fruit of this poisonous tree it became gripped by an unrelenting fever. In secret, it assumed the power of mass surveillance, an authority that by definition afflicts the innocent far more than the guilty.

It was only when I came to a fuller understanding of this surveillance and its harms that I became haunted by the awareness that we the public—the public of not just one country but of all the world—had never been granted a vote or even a chance to voice our opinion in this process. The system of near-universal surveillance had been set up not just without our consent, but in a way that deliberately hid every aspect of its programs from our knowledge. At every step, the changing procedures and their consequences were kept from everyone, including most lawmakers. To whom could I turn? Who could I talk to? Even to whisper the truth, even to a lawyer or a judge or to Congress, had been made so severe a felony that just a basic outlining of the broadest facts would invite a lifetime sentence in a federal cell.

I was lost, and fell into a dark mood while I struggled with my conscience. I love my country, and I believe in public service—my whole family, my whole family line for centuries, is filled with men and women who have spent their lives serving this country and its citizens. I myself had sworn an oath of service not to an agency, nor even a government, but to the public, in support and defense of the Constitution, whose guarantee of civil liberties had been so flagrantly violated. Now I was more than part of that violation: I was party to it. All of that

work, all of those years—who was I working for? How was I to balance my contract of secrecy with the agencies that employed me and the oath I'd sworn to my country's founding principles? To whom, or what, did I owe the greater allegiance? At what point was I morally obliged to break the law?

Reflecting on those principles brought me my answers. I realized that coming forward and disclosing to journalists the extent of my country's abuses wouldn't be advocating for anything radical, like the destruction of the government, or even of the IC. It would be a return to the pursuit of the government's, and the IC's, own stated ideals.

The freedom of a country can only be measured by its respect for the rights of its citizens, and it's my conviction that these rights are in fact limitations of state power that define exactly where and when a government may not infringe into that domain of personal or individual freedoms that during the American Revolution was called "liberty" and during the Internet Revolution is called "privacy."

It's been six years since I came forward because I witnessed a decline in the commitment of so-called advanced governments throughout the world to protecting this privacy, which I regard—and the United Nations regards—as a fundamental human right. In the span of those years, however, this decline has only continued as democracies regress into authoritarian populism. Nowhere has this regression been more apparent than in the relationship of governments to the press.

The attempts by elected officials to delegitimize journalism have been aided and abetted by a full-on assault on the principle of truth. What is real is being purposefully conflated with what is fake, through technologies that are capable of scaling that conflation into unprecedented global confusion. I know this process intimately enough, because the creation of irreality has always been the Intelligence Community's darkest art. The same agencies that, over the span of my career alone, had manipulated intelligence to create a pretext for war—and used illegal policies and a shadow judiciary to permit kidnapping as "extraordinary rendition," torture as "enhanced interrogation," and mass surveillance as "bulk collection"—didn't hesitate for a moment to call me a Chinese double agent, a Russian triple agent, and worse: "a millennial." They were able to say so much, and so freely, in large part because I refused to defend myself. From the moment I came forward to the present, I was resolute about never revealing any details of my personal life that might cause further distress to my family and friends, who were already suffering enough for my principles.

It was out of a concern for increasing that suffering that I hesitated to write this book. Ultimately, the decision to come forward with evidence of government wrongdoing was easier for me to make than the decision, here, to give an account of my life. The abuses I witnessed demanded action, but no one writes a memoir because they're unable to resist the dictates of their conscience. This is why I have tried to seek the permission of every family member, friend, and colleague who is named, or otherwise publicly identifiable, in these pages. Just as I refuse to presume to be the sole arbiter of another's privacy, I never thought that I alone should be able to choose which of my country's secrets should be made known to the public and which should not. That is why I disclosed the government's documents only to journalists. In fact, the number of documents that I disclosed directly to the public is zero.

I believe, just as those journalists believe, that a government may keep some information concealed. Even the most transparent democracy in the world may be allowed to classify, for example, the identity of its undercover agents and the movements of its troops in the field. This book includes no such secrets. To give an account of my life while protecting the privacy of my loved ones and not exposing legitimate government secrets is no simple task, but it is my task. Between those two responsibilities—that is where to find me.

PART ONE

1. Looking Through the Window

Many of the first 2,000 or so nights of my life ended in civil disobedience: crying, begging, bargaining, until—on night 2,193, the night I turned six years old—I discovered direct action. The authorities weren't interested in calls for reform, and I wasn't born yesterday.

The microwave's clock was easier than the stove's to roll back, if only because it was easier to reach.

The technical reality is that there are new networks born every day on the global cluster of interconnected communications networks that you—and about three billion other people, or roughly 42 percent of the world's population—use regularly.

All these protocols are known as application protocols, and comprise just one family of protocols among the myriad online. For example, in order for the data in any of these application protocols to cross the Internet and be delivered to your desktop, or laptop, or phone, it first has to be packaged up inside a dedicated transport protocol—think of how the regular snail-mail postal service prefers you to send your letters and parcels in their standard-size envelopes and boxes. TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) is used to route, among other applications, Web pages and email. UDP (User Datagram Protocol) is used to route more time-sensitive, real-time applications, such as Internet telephony and live broadcasts.

Any recounting of the multilayered workings of what in my childhood was called cyberspace, the Net, the Infobahn, and the Information Superhighway is bound to be incomplete, but the takeaway is this: these protocols have given us the means to digitize and put online damn near everything in the world that we don't eat, drink, wear, or dwell in. The Internet has become almost as integral to our lives as the air through which so many of its communications travel. And, as we've all been reminded—every time our social media feeds alert us to a post that tags us in a compromising light—to digitize something is to record it, in a format that will last forever.

Here's what strikes me when I think back to my childhood, particularly those first nine Internet-less years: I can't account for everything that happened back then, because I have only my memory to rely on. The data just doesn't exist. When I was a child, “the unforgettable experience” was not yet a threateningly literal technological description, but a passionate metaphorical prescription of significance: my first words, my first steps, my first lost tooth, my first time riding a bicycle. My generation was the last in American and perhaps even in world history for which this is true—the last undigitized generation, whose childhoods aren't up on the cloud but are mostly trapped in analog formats like handwritten diaries and Polaroids and VHS cassettes, tangible and imperfect artifacts that degrade with age and can be lost irretrievably. My schoolwork was done on paper with

pencils and erasers, not on networked tablets that logged my keystrokes. My growth spurts weren't tracked by smart-home technologies, but notched with a knife into the wood of the door frame of the house in which I grew up.

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Below the main floor was a more or less finished basement—a rarity in North Carolina, especially so close to the coast. Basements tend to flood, and ours, certainly, was perennially damp, despite the constant workings of the dehumidifier and sump pump.

For nearly all the years that my family spent in that house in Elizabeth City, this bedroom was mine, and its window was, too.

One night the screen showed a falling ball and a bar at the bottom; my father had to move the bar horizontally to hit the ball, bounce it up, and knock down a wall of multicolored bricks (*Arkanoid*). On another night, he sat before a screen of multicolored bricks in different shapes; they were always falling, and as they fell he moved and rotated them to assemble them into perfect rows, which immediately vanished (*Tetris*). I was truly confused, however, about what my father was doing—recreation or part of his job—when I peeked through the window one night and saw him flying.

Choplipter! Was thrilling. Again and again I watched these sorties fly out of our den and over a flat desert moon, shooting at, and being shot at by, enemy jets and enemy tanks. The helicopter kept landing and lifting off, as my father tried to rescue a flashing crowd of people and ferry them to safety.

[His father was a Choplipter?]

2. The Invisible Wall

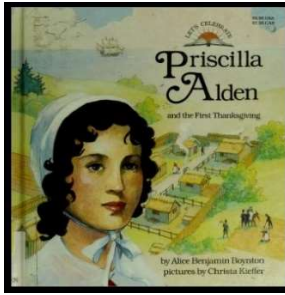
In the Chapter 1 revision for Young Readers we saw that Snowden and his editorial handlers decided to eschew (gesundheit) the didactic approach and delete hundreds of words about generational differences (why alienate them early in the book) – his a bridge generation between VHS/cassette tapes/Polaroid, “the last undigitized generation,” and the post-9/11 generation that has grown up often blithely unaware of the degree of intrusiveness of the Surveillance State that watches their Timeline doings with a predatory hawk’s eye. Edward wishes to connect with presumed young readers in his second edition.

Still, in Chapter 2, I found curious, as a critically inflamed reader, the continued insertion of his Mayflower forebears, in particular, Priscilla Mullins, who Snowden describes as “the only single woman of marriageable age onboard.” The connoisseur of intrigue wants to know more: How did she manage to stay unimpregnated among all those crude and carnal Pilgrims? Let’s recall all the miscreants who have claimed that their relatives on the Mayflower – Marilyn Monroe (the billowing ship’s sails may have inspired her iconic wind in the willows moment), Humphrey Bogart (comes from tough guy indentured servant stock), George W. Bush (he was playing with his ‘pet goat’ for most of the trip), Clint Eastwood (Did Priscilla make his day?), Sarah Palin (she just kept getting whiter), Hugh Hefner (his gaze had Priscilla in a bunny costume), Alec Baldwin (look at the Trump detractor now), Richard Gere (do you trust him?), Julia Childs (boy, could she choke a chicken), and Dick Cheney (oh, wait, maybe I read something about the Mayflower Hotel). You’re going to tell me that Priscilla Mullins escaped the influences of this cocktail of Plymouth Babylon?

As the late great Glen Ford of Black Agenda Report fame notes in his take down of the Mighty Whitey festival of carnality known as Thanksgiving, even the governor of the Pilgrims was alarmed at their often toothless uncouthness:

Each Pilgrim drank at least a half gallon of beer a day, which they preferred even to water. This daily inebriation led their governor, William Bradford, to comment on his people’s ‘notorious sin,’ which included their ‘drunkenness and uncleanness’ and rampant ‘sodomy.’

This, of course, leads to the obvious question: How did Priscilla Mullins choose the man who would be her king? And why the barrel-maker, John Alden. What do we know about Priscilla Mullins really? We know that Miles Standish had the devilish hots for her, his blueballed frustration may itself had led to the annihilation of “Indians” in every direction. We know that Henry Wordsworth Longfellow wrote a *looong* poem about Priscilla, titled [The Courtship of Miles Standish](#), which detailed the “love triangle” between Priscilla, Standish (later standoffish), and Alden. The ménage à trois must have been a barrel of laughs. What else do we know about this fair maiden? I recently came across a children’s book that burnishes her image with dear bewonderment befitting he status as a landed single woman in the New World. It’s called *Priscilla Alden and the First Thanksgiving*.



You can read it [here](#).

Again, this compilation is mostly about the crucial stuff Ed Snowden and his publisher left out of the Young Readers Edition. Given how much vitriol the Pilgrims have faced these last few decades, losing their privileged status as early pioneers and pure-at-heartigans, Snowden might have opted to let Priscilla fade into old history nobody believes any more. Who would want to admit that their forebears were on the same ship as the saddamite GW Bush? Saying, as he does in his memoir, that he traces his stock back to the Mayflower, in order to establish his patriotism (or whatever), is a bit dated for today's jaded readers.

Just sayin', Ed.

3. Beltway Boy

In Chapter 2, I wondered aloud why Snowden and his editors had decided to leave in the story of his Mighty Whitey roots dating back to the Mayflower at a time when such referencing was frowned upon, given the nature of the massacring the early Mayflower pilgrims got up to with the local helpful “Injuns.” Ballsy? Or, despite the dire warnings of his memoir – that our country is no longer the glorious Love Gazelle we once all thought it was minus (minus the minorities, “Injuns,” women, Mexicans, and Lee Harvey Oswald (sorry, it slipped in, as Oswald was the last American intel guy who defected to Russia) – he actually still believes in the hooey we’ve made of history. Jeesh.

In this chapter, we get back to our purpose of this exercise -- re-constituting the juice squeezed from his adult version of what happened events to get to the kiddy version with its myriad niceties, homilies, legends of the fall, origin tales of his name (Mt. Snow Dun and the hairy man). Here we note simply two excisions:

William Snowden, my direct paternal ancestor, served as a captain, was taken prisoner by the British in the Battle of Fort Washington in New York, and died in custody at one of the notorious sugar house prisons in Manhattan. (Legend has it that the British killed their POWs by forcing them to eat gruel laced with ground glass.) **p.28**

and

Anne Arundel County encompasses nearly all of the 1,976 acres of woodland that King Charles II granted to the family of Richard Snowden in 1686. The enterprises the Snowdens established there include the Patuxent Iron Works, one of colonial America’s most important forges and a major manufacturer of cannonballs and bullets, and Snowden Plantation, a farm and dairy run by Richard Snowden’s grandsons. After serving in the heroic Maryland Line of the Continental Army, they returned to the plantation and—most fully living the principles of independence—abolished their family’s practice of slavery, freeing their two hundred African slaves nearly a full century before the Civil War. **pp. 28-29**

Nearby, Route 32/Patuxent Freeway leads directly to Fort George G. Meade, the second-largest army base in the country and the home of the NSA. Fort Meade, in fact, is built atop land that was once owned by my Snowden cousins, and that was either bought from them (in one account) or expropriated from them (according to others) by the US government. **p.29**

Here we note that Snowden and his editors decided to leave out the bit about a forebear doing hard time in a “sugar” house prison, and the ground glass inmates were forced to eat. Talk about ingest-ice. A quick Wikipedia of these notorious hell holes does describe neglect and want that shames our diminishing humanity. What’s left out is that the sugar houses held cane cut by slaves in the West Indies (the original home of slavery in the Americas) brought to NYC for processing (cotton manufacture was the other big slave-worked raw product providing jobs in NYC to whites.)

Combine the sugar house reference with Snowden’s deletion of the passage in his memoir that refers to the massive plantation his forbears possessed, with “200 slaves,” and you have a missed teaching moment for his presumed young readers. In addition, how the government eventually acquired the former Snowden slave plantation – either purchase or, more likely, by eminent domain – to build Fort Meade and the NSA headquarters is a story that might have

gained from further explication and application to the government malfeasance, even back in the days of fervent anti-British patriotism. Instead, the passage is simply edited out. Sigh.

Homo contractus

I had hoped to serve my country, but instead I went to work for it. This is not a trivial distinction. The sort of honorable stability offered to my father and Pop wasn't quite as available to me, or to anyone of my generation. Both my father and Pop entered the service of their country on the first day of their working lives and retired from that service on the last. That was the American government that was familiar to me, from earliest childhood—when it had helped to feed, clothe, and house me—to the moment when it had cleared me to go into the Intelligence Community. That government had treated a citizen's service like a compact: it would provide for you and your family, in return for your integrity and the prime years of your life.

But I came into the IC during a different age.

By the time I arrived, the sincerity of public service had given way to the greed of the private sector, and the sacred compact of the soldier, officer, and career civil servant was being replaced by the unholy bargain of *Homo contractus*, the primary species of US Government 2.0. This creature was not a sworn servant but a transient worker, whose patriotism was incentivized by a better paycheck and for whom the federal government was less the ultimate authority than the ultimate client.

During the American Revolution, it had made sense for the Continental Congress to hire privateers and mercenaries to protect the independence of what was then barely a functioning republic. But for third-millennium hyperpower America to rely on privatized forces for the national defense struck me as strange and vaguely sinister. Indeed, today contracting is most often associated with its major failures, such as the fighting-for-hire work of Blackwater (which changed its name to Xe Services after its employees were convicted of killing fourteen Iraqi civilians, and then changed its name again to Academi after it was acquired by a group of private investors), or the

torture-for-hire work of CACI and Titan (both of which supplied personnel who terrorized prisoners at Abu Ghraib).

These sensationalist cases can lead the public to believe that the government employs contractors in order to maintain cover and deniability, off-loading the illegal or quasi-legal dirty work to keep its hands clean and conscience clear. But that's not entirely true, or at least not entirely true in the IC, which tends to focus less on deniability and more on never getting caught in the first place. Instead, the primary purpose served by IC contracting is much more mundane: it's a workaround, a loophole, a hack that lets agencies circumvent federal caps on hiring. Every agency has a head count, a legislative limit that dictates the number of people it can hire to do a certain type of work. But contractors, because they're not directly employed by the federal government, aren't included in that number. The agencies can hire as many of them as they can pay for, and they can pay for as many of them as they want—all they have to do is testify to a few select congressional subcommittees that the terrorists are coming for our children, or the Russians are in our emails, or the Chinese are in our power grid. Congress never says no to this type of begging, which is actually a kind of threat, and reliably capitulates to the IC's demands.

Among the documents that I provided to journalists was the 2013 Black Budget. This is a classified budget in which over 68 percent of its money, \$52.6 billion, was dedicated to the IC, including funding for 107,035 IC employees—more than a fifth of whom, some 21,800 people, were full-time contractors. And that number doesn't even include the tens of thousands more employed by companies that have signed contracts (or subcontracts, or sub-subcontracts) with the agencies for a specific service or project. Those contractors are never counted by the government, not even in the Black Budget, because to add their ranks to the contracting total would make one disturbing fact extraordinarily clear: the work of American Intelligence is done as frequently by private employees as it is by government servants.

To be sure, there are many, even in government, who maintain that this trickle-down scheme is advantageous. With contractors, they say, the government can encourage competitive bidding to keep costs down, and isn't on the hook to pay pensions and benefits. But the real advantage for government officials is the conflict of interest inherent in the budgeting process itself. IC directors ask Congress for money to rent contract workers from private companies, congresspeople approve that money, and then those IC directors and congresspeople are rewarded, after they retire from office,

by being given high-paying positions and consultancies with the very companies they've just enriched. From the vantage of the corporate boardroom, contracting functions as governmentally assisted corruption. It's America's most legal and convenient method of transferring public money to the private purse.

But however much the work of Intelligence is privatized, the federal government remains the only authority that can grant an individual clearance to access classified information. And because clearance candidates must be sponsored in order to apply for clearance—meaning they must already have a job offer for a position that requires clearance—most contractors begin their careers in a government position. After all, it's rarely worth the expense for a private company to sponsor your clearance application and then pay you to wait around for a year for the government's approval. It makes more financial sense for a company to just hire an already-cleared government employee. The situation created by this economy is one in which government bears all the burdens of background checks but reaps few of the benefits. It must do all of the work and assume all of the expense of clearing a candidate, who, the moment they have their clearance, more often than not bolts for the door, exchanging the blue badge of the government employee for the green badge of the contractor. The joke was that the green symbolized "money."

The government job that had sponsored me for my TS/SCI clearance wasn't the one I wanted, but the one I could find: I was officially an employee of the state of Maryland, working for the University of Maryland at College Park. The university was helping the NSA open a new institution called CASL, the Center for Advanced Study of Language.

CASL's ostensible mission was to study how people learned languages and to develop computer-assisted methods to help them do so more quickly and better. The hidden corollary of this mission was that the NSA also wanted to develop ways to improve computer comprehension of language. If the other agencies were having difficulties finding competent Arabic (and Farsi and Dari and Pashto and Kurdish) speakers who passed their often ridiculous security checks to translate and interpret on the ground—I know too many Americans rejected merely because they had an inconvenient distant cousin they'd never even met—the NSA was having its own tough time ensuring that its computers could comprehend and analyze the massive amount of foreign-language communications that they were intercepting.

I don't have a more granular idea of the kinds of things that CASL was supposed to do, for the simple reason that when I showed up for work with

my bright, shiny clearance, the place wasn't even open yet. In fact, its building was still under construction. Until it was finished and the tech was installed, my job was essentially that of a night-shift security guard. My responsibilities were limited to showing up every day to patrol the empty halls after the construction workers—those other contractors—were finished, making sure that nobody burned down the building or broke in and bugged it. I spent hour after hour making rounds through the half-completed shell, inspecting the day's progress: trying out the chairs that had just been installed in the state-of-the-art auditorium, casting stones back and forth across the suddenly graveled roof, admiring the new drywall, and literally watching the paint dry.

This is the life of after-hours security at a top secret facility, and truthfully I didn't mind it. I was getting paid to do basically nothing but wander in the dark with my thoughts, and I had all the time in the world to use the one functioning computer that I had access to on the premises to search for a new position. During the daytime, I caught up on my sleep and went out on photography expeditions with Lindsay, who—thanks to my wooing and scheming—had finally dumped her other boyfriends.

At the time I was still naive enough to think that my position with CASL would be a bridge to a full-time federal career. But the more I looked around, the more I was amazed to find that there were very few opportunities to serve my country directly, at least in a meaningful technical role. I had a better chance of working as a contractor for a private company that served my country for profit; and I had the best chance, it turned out, of working as a subcontractor for a private company that contracted with another private company that served my country for profit. The realization was dizzying.

It was particularly bizarre to me that most of the systems engineering and systems administration jobs that were out there were private, because these positions came with almost universal access to the employer's digital existence. It's unimaginable that a major bank or even a social media outfit would hire outsiders for systems-level work. In the context of the US government, however, restructuring your intelligence agencies so that your most sensitive systems were being run by somebody who didn't really work for you was what passed for innovation.

★ ★ ★

THE AGENCIES WERE hiring tech companies to hire kids, and then they were giving them the keys to the kingdom, because—as Congress and the press

were told—the agencies didn’t have a choice. No one else knew how the keys, or the kingdom, worked. I tried to rationalize all this into a pretext for optimism. I swallowed my incredulity, put together a résumé, and went to the job fairs, which, at least in the early aughts, were the primary venues where contractors found new work and government employees were poached. These fairs went by the dubious name of “Clearance Jobs”—I think I was the only one who found that double meaning funny.

At the time, these events were held every month at the Ritz-Carlton in Tysons Corner, Virginia, just down the road from the CIA’s headquarters, or at one of the grubbier Marriott-type hotels near the NSA’s headquarters at Fort Meade. They were pretty much like any other job fair, I’m told, with one crucial exception: here, it always felt like there were more recruiters than there were recruits. That should give you an indication of the industry’s appetite. The recruiters paid a lot of money to be at these fairs, because these were the only places in the country where everyone who walked through the door wearing their stickum name tag badge had supposedly already been prescreened online and cross-checked with the agencies—and so was presumed to already have a clearance, and probably also the requisite skills.

Once you left the well-appointed hotel lobby for the all-business ballroom, you entered Planet Contractor. Everybody would be there: this wasn’t the University of Maryland anymore—this was Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Booz Allen Hamilton, DynCorp, Titan, CACI, SAIC, COMSO, as well as a hundred other different acronyms I’d never heard of. Some contractors had tables, but the larger ones had booths that were fully furnished and equipped with refreshments.

After you handed a prospective employer a copy of your résumé and small-talked a bit, in a sort of informal interview, they’d break out their binders, which contained lists of all the government billets they were trying to fill. But because this work touched on the clandestine, the billets were accompanied not by standardized job titles and traditional job descriptions but with intentionally obscure, coded verbiage that was often particular to each contractor. One company’s Senior Developer 3 might or might not be equivalent to another company’s Principal Analyst 2, for example. Frequently the only way to differentiate among these positions was to note that each specified its own requirements of years of experience, level of certifications, and type of security clearance.

After the 2013 revelations, the US government would try to disparage me by referring to me as “only a contractor” or “a former Dell employee,” with

the implication that I didn't enjoy the same kinds of clearance and access as a blue-badged agency staffer. Once that discrediting characterization was established, the government proceeded to accuse me of "job-hopping," hinting that I was some sort of disgruntled worker who didn't get along with superiors or an exceptionally ambitious employee dead-set on getting ahead at all costs. The truth is that these were both lies of convenience. The IC knows better than anyone that changing jobs is part of the career track of every contractor: it's a mobility situation that the agencies themselves created, and profit from.

In national security contracting, especially in tech contracting, you often find yourself physically working at an agency facility, but nominally—on paper—working for Dell, or Lockheed Martin, or one of the umpteen smaller firms that frequently get bought by a Dell or a Lockheed Martin. In such an acquisition, of course, the smaller firm's contracts get bought, too, and suddenly there's a different employer and job title on your business card. Your day-to-day work, though, remains the same: you're still sitting at the agency facility, doing your tasks. Nothing has changed at all. Meanwhile, the dozen coworkers sitting to your left and right—the same coworkers you work with on the same projects daily—might technically be employed by a dozen different companies, and those companies might still be a few degrees removed from the corporate entities that hold the primary contracts with the agency.

I wish I remembered the exact chronology of my contracting, but I don't have a copy of my résumé anymore—that file, `Edward_Snowden_Resume.doc`, is locked up in the Documents folder of one of my old home computers, since seized by the FBI. I do recall, however, that my first major contracting gig was actually a subcontracting gig: the CIA had hired BAE Systems, which had hired COMSO, which hired me.

BAE Systems is a midsize American subdivision of British Aerospace, set up expressly to win contracts from the American IC. COMSO was basically its recruiter, a few folks who spent all their time driving around the Beltway trying to find the actual contractors ("the asses") and sign them up ("put the asses in chairs"). Of all the companies I talked to at the job fairs, COMSO was the hungriest, perhaps because it was among the smallest. I never learned what the company's acronym stood for, or even if it stood for anything. Technically speaking, COMSO would be my employer, but I never worked a single day at a COMSO office, or at a BAE Systems office, and few contractors ever would. I'd only work at CIA headquarters.

In fact, I only ever visited the COMSO office, which was in Greenbelt, Maryland, maybe two or three times in my life. One of these was when I went down there to negotiate my salary and sign some paperwork. At CASL I'd been making around \$30K/year, but that job didn't have anything to do with technology, so I felt comfortable asking COMSO for \$50K. When I named that figure to the guy behind the desk, he said, "What about \$60K?"

At the time I was so inexperienced, I didn't understand why he was trying to overpay me. I knew, I guess, that this wasn't ultimately COMSO's money, but I only later understood that some of the contracts that COMSO and BAE and others handled were of the type that's called "cost-plus." This meant that the middlemen contractors billed the agencies for whatever an employee got paid, plus a fee of 3 to 5 percent of that every year. Bumping up salaries was in everyone's interest—everyone's, that is, except the taxpayer's.

The COMSO guy eventually talked me, or himself, up to \$62K, as a result of my once again agreeing to work the night shift. He held out his hand and, as I shook it, he introduced himself to me as my "manager." He went on to explain that the title was just a formality, and that I'd be taking my orders directly from the CIA. "If all goes well," he said, "we'll never meet again."

In the spy movies and TV shows, when someone tells you something like that, it usually means that you're about to go on a dangerous mission and might die. But in real spy life it just means, "Congratulations on the job." By the time I was out the door, I'm sure he'd already forgotten my face.

I left that meeting in a buoyant mood, but on the drive back, reality set in: this, I realized, was going to be my daily commute. If I was going to still live in Ellicott City, Maryland, in proximity to Lindsay, but work at the CIA in Virginia, my commute could be up to an hour and a half each way in Beltway gridlock, and that would be the end of me. I knew it wouldn't take long before I'd start to lose my mind. There weren't enough books on tape in the universe.

I couldn't ask Lindsay to move down to Virginia with me because she was still just in her sophomore year at MICA, and had class three days a week. We discussed this, and for cover referred to my job down there as COMSO—as in, "Why does COMSO have to be so far away?" Finally, we decided that I'd find a small place down there, near COMSO—just a small place to crash at during the days while I worked at night, at COMSO—and then I'd come up to Maryland again every weekend, or she'd come down to me.

I set off to find that place, something smack in the middle of that Venn diagram overlap of cheap enough that I could afford it and nice enough that Lindsay could survive it. It turned out to be a difficult search: Given the number of people who work at the CIA, and the CIA's location in Virginia—where the housing density is, let's say, semirural—the prices were through the roof. The 22100s are some of the most expensive zip codes in America.

Eventually, browsing on Craigslist, I found a room that was surprisingly within my budget, in a house surprisingly near—less than fifteen minutes from—CIA headquarters. I went to check it out, expecting a cruddy bachelor pad pigsty. Instead, I pulled up in front of a large glass-fronted McMansion, immaculately maintained with a topiary lawn that was seasonally decorated. I'm being completely serious when I say that as I approached the place, the smell of pumpkin spice got stronger.

A guy named Gary answered the door. He was older, which I expected from the "Dear Edward" tone of his email, but I hadn't expected him to be so well dressed. He was very tall, with buzz-cut gray hair, and was wearing a suit, and over the suit, an apron. He asked me very politely if I didn't mind waiting a moment. He was just then busy in the kitchen, where he was preparing a tray of apples, sticking cloves in them and dousing them with nutmeg, cinnamon, and sugar.

Once those apples were baking in the oven, Gary showed me the room, which was in the basement, and told me I could move in immediately. I accepted the offer and put down my security deposit and one month's rent.

Then he told me the house rules, which helpfully rhymed:

No mess.

No pets.

No overnight guests.

I confess that I almost immediately violated the first rule, and that I never had any interest in violating the second. As for the third, Gary made an exception for Lindsay.

The Tunnel

Imagine you're entering a tunnel. Imagine the perspective: as you look down the length that stretches ahead of you, notice how the walls seem to narrow to the tiny dot of light at the other end. The light at the end of the tunnel is a symbol of hope, and it's also what people say they see in near-death experiences. They have to go to it, they say. They're drawn to it. But then where else is there to go in a tunnel, except through it? Hasn't everything led up to this point?

My tunnel was the Tunnel: an enormous Pearl Harbor-era airplane factory turned NSA facility located under a pineapple field in Kunia, on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. The facility was built out of reinforced concrete, its eponymous tunnel a kilometer-long tube in the side of a hill opening up into three cavernous floors of server vaults and offices. At the time the Tunnel was built, the hill was covered over with huge amounts of sand, soil, desiccated pineapple plant leaves, and patches of sun-parched grass to camouflage it from Japanese bombers. Sixty years later it resembled the vast burial mound of a lost civilization, or some gigantic arid pile that a weird god had heaped up in the middle of a god-size sandbox. Its official name was the Kunia Regional Security Operations Center.

I went to work there, still on a Dell contract, but now for the NSA again, early in 2012. One day that summer—actually, it was my birthday—as I passed through the security checks and proceeded down the tunnel, it struck me: this, in front of me, was my future.

I'm not saying that I made any decisions at that instant. The most important decisions in life are never made that way. They're made subconsciously and only express themselves consciously once fully formed—once you're finally strong enough to admit to yourself that this is what your conscience has already chosen for you, this is the course that your beliefs have

decreed. That was my twenty-ninth birthday present to myself: the awareness that I had entered a tunnel that would narrow my life down toward a single, still-indistinct act.

Just as Hawaii has always been an important waystation—historically, the US military treated the island chain as little more than a mid-Pacific refueling depot for boats and planes—it had also become an important switchpoint for American communications. These include the intelligence that flowed between the contiguous forty-eight states and my former place of employment, Japan, as well as other sites in Asia.

The job I'd taken was a significant step down the career ladder, with duties I could at this point perform in my sleep. It was supposed to mean less stress, a lighter burden. I was the sole employee of the aptly named Office of Information Sharing, where I worked as a SharePoint systems administrator. SharePoint is a Microsoft product, a dopey poky program, or rather a grab-bag of programs, focused on internal document management: who can read what, who can edit what, who can send and receive what, and so on. By making me Hawaii's SharePoint systems administrator, the NSA had made me the manager of document management. I was, in effect, the reader in chief at one of the agency's most significant facilities. As was my typical practice in any new technical position, I spent the earliest days automating my tasks—meaning writing scripts to do my work for me—so as to free up my time for something more interesting.

Before I go any further, I want to emphasize this: my active searching out of NSA abuses began not with the copying of documents, but with the reading of them. My initial intention was just to confirm the suspicions that I'd first had back in 2009 in Tokyo. Three years later, I was determined to find out if an American system of mass surveillance existed and, if it did, how it functioned. Though I was uncertain about how to conduct this investigation, I was at least sure of this: I had to understand exactly how the system worked before I could decide what, if anything, to do about it.

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THIS, OF COURSE, was not why Lindsay and I had come to Hawaii. We hadn't hauled all the way out to paradise just so I could throw our lives away for a principle.

We'd come to start over. To start over yet again.

My doctors told me that the climate and more relaxed lifestyle in Hawaii might be beneficial for my epilepsy, since lack of sleep was thought to be the

leading trigger of the seizures. Also, the move eliminated the driving problem: the Tunnel was within bicycling distance of a number of communities in Kunia, the quiet heart of the island's dry, red interior. It was a pleasant, twenty-minute ride to work, through sugarcane fields in brilliant sunshine. With the mountains rising calm and high in the clear blue distance, the gloomy mood of the last few months lifted like the morning fog.

Lindsay and I found a decent-size bungalow-type house on Eleu Street in Waipahu's Royal Kunia, which we furnished with our stuff from Columbia, Maryland, since Dell paid relocation expenses. The furniture didn't get much use, though, since the sun and heat would often cause us to walk in the door, strip off our clothes, and lie naked on the carpet beneath the overworked air conditioner. Eventually, Lindsay turned the garage into a fitness studio, filling it with yoga mats and the spinning pole she'd brought from Columbia. I set up a new Tor server. Soon, traffic from around the world was reaching the Internet via the laptop sitting in our entertainment center, which had the ancillary benefit of hiding my own Internet activity in the noise.

One night during the summer I turned twenty-nine, Lindsay finally prevailed on me to go out with her to a luau. She'd been after me to go for a while, because a few of her pole-fitness friends had been involved in some hula-girl capacity, but I'd been resistant. It had seemed like such a cheesy touristy thing to do, and had felt, somehow, disrespectful. Hawaiian culture is ancient, although its traditions are very much alive; the last thing I wanted was to disturb someone's sacred ritual.

Finally, however, I capitulated. I'm very glad I did. What impressed me the most was not the luau itself—though it was very much a fire-twirling spectacle—but the old man who was holding court nearby in a little amphitheater down by the sea. He was a native Hawaiian, an erudite man with that soft but nasal island voice, who was telling a group of people gathered around a fire the creation stories of the islands' indigenous peoples.

The one story that stuck with me concerned the twelve sacred islands of the gods. Apparently, there had existed a dozen islands in the Pacific that were so beautiful and pure and blessed with freshwater that they had to be kept secret from humanity, who would spoil them. Three of them were especially revered: Kane-huna-moku, Kahiki, and Pali-uli. The lucky gods who inhabited these islands decided to keep them hidden, because they believed that a glimpse of their bounty would drive people mad. After considering numerous ingenious schemes by which these islands might be concealed, including dyeing them the color of the sea, or sinking them to the

bottom of the ocean, they finally decided to make them float in the air.

Once the islands were airborne, they were blown from place to place, staying constantly in motion. At sunrise and sunset, especially, you might think that you'd noticed one, hovering far at the horizon. But the moment you pointed it out to anyone, it would suddenly drift away or assume another form entirely, such as a pumice raft, a hunk of rock ejected by a volcanic eruption—or a cloud.

I thought about that legend a lot while I went about my search. The revelations I was pursuing were exactly like those islands: exotic preserves that a pantheon of self-important, self-appointed rulers were convinced had to be kept secret and hidden from humanity. I wanted to know what the NSA's surveillance capabilities were exactly; whether and how they extended beyond the agency's actual surveillance activities; who approved them; who knew about them; and, last but surely not least, how these systems—both technical and institutional—really operated.

The moment I'd think that I spotted one of these "islands"—some capitalized code name I didn't understand, some program referenced in a note buried at the end of a report—I'd go chasing after further mentions of it in other documents, but find none. It was as if the program I was searching for had floated away from me and was lost. Then, days later, or weeks later, it might surface again under a different designation, in a document from a different department.

Sometimes I'd find a program with a recognizable name, but without an explanation of what it did. Other times I'd just find a nameless explanation, with no indication as to whether the capability it described was an active program or an aspirational desire. I was running up against compartments within compartments, caveats within caveats, suites within suites, programs within programs. This was the nature of the NSA—by design, the left hand rarely knew what the right hand was doing.

In a way, what I was doing reminded me of a documentary I once watched about map-making—specifically, about the way that nautical charts were created in the days before imaging and GPS. Ship captains would keep logs and note their coordinates, which landbound mapmakers would then try to interpret. It was through the gradual accretion of this data, over hundreds of years, that the full extent of the Pacific became known, and all its islands identified.

But I didn't have hundreds of years or hundreds of ships. I was alone, one man hunched over a blank blue ocean, trying to find where this one speck of

dry land, this one data point, belonged in relation to all the others.

25. The Boy

To open this chapter for the kids, Snowden and his editors decided to radically condense the first few paragraphs and begin with the simple declarative sentence: “I was more curious than ever about the one fact I was still finding elusive: the absolute limit of who the IC could turn its gaze against.” Okay, this is fine, although the original passage from the adult version conjured up the job interview scene from Oliver Stone’s Snowden where the Ayn Rand comes up and Snowden not only affirms his love for the lugubrious, shrugging lady, but when his interviewer immediately quotes from Ayn Rand – “‘One man can stop the motor of the world.’” To which Snowden immediately replies, “I truly believe that, sir.” – Compare this answer and its implications to the passages reintroduced from the adult version:

It’s only in hindsight that I’m able to appreciate just how high my star had risen. I’d gone from being the student who couldn’t speak in class to being the teacher of the language of a new age, from the child of modest, middle-class Beltway parents to the man living the island life and making so much money that it had lost its meaning. In just the seven short years of my career, I’d climbed from maintaining local servers to crafting and implementing globally deployed systems—from graveyard-shift security guard to key master of the puzzle palace.

But there’s always a danger in letting even the most qualified person rise too far, too fast, before they’ve had enough time to get cynical and abandon their idealism. I occupied one of the most unexpectedly omniscient positions in the Intelligence Community—toward the bottom rung of the managerial ladder, but high atop heaven in terms of access. And while this gave me the phenomenal, and frankly undeserved, ability to observe the IC in its grim fullness, it also left me more curious than ever about the one fact I was still finding elusive: the absolute limit of who the agency could turn its gaze against. It was a limit set less in policy or law than in **the ruthless, unyielding capabilities of what I now knew to be a world-spanning machine.** Was there anyone this machine could not surveil? Was there anywhere this machine could not go?

The only way to discover the answer was to descend, abandoning my panoptic perch for the narrow vision of an operational role. The NSA employees with the freest access to the rawest forms of intelligence were those who sat in the operator’s chair and typed into their computers the names of the individuals who’d fallen under suspicion, foreigners and US citizens alike. For one reason or another, or for no reason at all, these individuals had become targets of the agency’s closest scrutiny, with the NSA interested in finding out everything about them and their communications. My ultimate destination, I knew, was the exact point of this interface—the exact point where the state cast its eye on the human and the human remained unaware.

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But the biggest excision from this chapter is the one that describes the practice of some male NSA employees who used government tools to spy on the doings of their love interests. It was known as LOVEINT. Here’s how Snowden’s described it in the full adult version:

I didn’t type the names of the agency director or the president into XKEYSCORE, but after enough time with the system I realized I could have. Everyone’s communications were in the system—everyone’s. I was initially fearful that if I searched those in the uppermost echelons of state, I’d be caught and fired, or worse. But it was surpassingly simple to disguise a query

regarding even the most prominent figure by encoding my search terms in a machine format that looked like gibberish to humans but would be perfectly understandable to XKEYSCORE. If any of the auditors who were responsible for reviewing the searches ever bothered to look more closely, they would see only a snippet of obfuscated code, while I would be able to scroll through the most personal activities of a Supreme Court justice or a congressperson.

As far as I could tell, none of my new colleagues intended to abuse their powers so grandly, although if they had it's not like they'd ever mention it. Anyway, when analysts thought about abusing the system, they were far less interested in what it could do for them professionally than in what it could do for them personally. This led to the practice known as LOVEINT, a gross joke on HUMINT and SIGINT and a travesty of intelligence, in which analysts used the agency's programs to surveil their current and former lovers along with objects of more casual affection—reading their emails, listening in on their phone calls, and stalking them online. NSA employees knew that only the dumbest analysts were ever caught red-handed, and though the law stated that anyone engaging in any type of surveillance for personal use could be locked up for at least a decade, no one in the agency's history had been sentenced to even a day in prison for the crime. Analysts understood that the government would never publicly prosecute them, because you can't exactly convict someone of abusing your secret system of mass surveillance if you refuse to admit the existence of the system itself. The obvious costs of such a policy became apparent to me as I sat along the back wall of vault V22 at NSA headquarters with two of the more talented infrastructure analysts, whose workspace was decorated with a seven-foot-tall picture of Star Wars' famous wookie, Chewbacca. I realized, as one of them was explaining to me the details of his targets' security routines, that intercepted nudes were a kind of informal office currency, because his buddy kept spinning in his chair to interrupt us with a smile, saying, "Check her out," to which my instructor would invariably reply "Bonus!" or "Nice!" The unspoken transactional rule seemed to be that if you found a naked photo or video of an attractive target—or someone in communication with a target—you had to show the rest of the boys, at least as long as there weren't any women around. That was how you knew you could trust each other: you had shared in one another's crimes.

Again, it's an editorial decision, and perhaps it was simply felt that the LOVEINT section, with its implicit sexual content, was not meet for young adult readers. However, I see it as an unnecessary omission, and, again, a lost opportunity for Snowden to expand for his young readership on the personal responsibility to the people he breached for spying for pleasure. . LOVEINT programs are rife. They need to be exposed and amplified as much as possible to stir people into outrage enough to do something about it.

Or maybe Snowden did it as a favor to his then-girlfriend, Lindsay (now his wife, living with him in Russia), as he closes the chapter thinking about Lindsay and his mom (on her way to be with Lindsay) as he prepares to go on the lam, fate uncertain. The end of the chapter also serves as a set-up, a few chapters later, when, Snowden decides to insert a chapter written by Lindsay, "From the Diaries of Lindsay Mills," that is a kind of alibi / corroboration of the facts he lays down regarding his departure.

28. From the Diaries of Lindsay Mills

Snowden and his editors curiously inserted this chapter in the original adult version, and then even more curiously removed it in the Young Readers Edition. In place of her timeline expressed, we find a link from the publisher, calling the chapter an optional “bonus.” It’s curious. Here it is:

As far away from home as I was, my thoughts were consumed with Lindsay. I’ve been wary of telling her story—the story of what happened to her once I was gone: the FBI interrogations, the surveillance, the press attention, the online harassment, the confusion and pain, the anger and sadness. Finally, I realized that only Lindsay herself should be the person to recount that period. No one else has the experience, but more than that: no one else has the right. Luckily, Lindsay has kept a diary since adolescence, using it to record her life and draft her art. She has graciously agreed to let me include a few pages here. In the entries that follow, all names have been changed (except those of family), some typos fixed, and a few redactions made. Otherwise, this is how it was, from the moment that I left Hawaii.

5.22.2013

Stopped in at K-Mart to get a lei. Trying to welcome Wendy with proper aloha spirit, but I’m pissed. Ed’s been planning his mother’s visit for weeks. He’s the one who invited her. I was hoping he’d be there when I woke up this morning. On the drive back to Waipahu from the airport Wendy was worried. She’s not used to him having to go away on a moment’s notice. I tried to tell her this was usual. But it was usual when we lived overseas, not in Hawaii, and I can’t remember any other time that Ed was away and wasn’t in touch. We went to a nice dinner to distract ourselves and Wendy talked about how she thought Ed was on medical leave. It didn’t make any sense to her that he’d be called away for work while on medical leave. The moment we got home Wendy went to bed. I checked my phone and found I had three missed calls from an unknown number, and one missed call from a long foreign number, no voicemails. I Googled the long foreign number. Ed must be in Hong Kong.

5.24.2013

Wendy was home all day alone, thoughts just running circles in her brain. I feel bad for her and can only console myself by thinking how Ed would handle having to entertain my own mother by himself. Over dinner, Wendy kept asking me about Ed’s health, which I guess is understandable, given her own history of epilepsy. She said she’s worried that he had another seizure, and then she started crying, and then I started crying. I’m just realizing that I’m worried too. But instead of epilepsy, I’m thinking, What if he’s off having an affair? Who is she? Just try and get through this visit and have a good time. Take a puddle jumper to the Big Island. To Kilauea, the volcano, as planned. Once Wendy goes back, reassess things.

6.3.2013

Brought Wendy to the airport, to fly back to MD. She didn’t want to go back, but she has work. I took her as far as I could go and hugged her. I didn’t want to let go of the hug. Then she got in line for security. Came home to find Ed’s Skype status has changed to: “Sorry but it had to be done.” I don’t know when he changed it. Could’ve been today, could’ve been last

month. I just checked on Skype and happened to notice it, and I'm crazy enough to think he's sending me a message.

6.7.2013

Woke up to a call from NSA Special Agent Megan Smith asking me to call her back about Ed. Still feeling sick with fever. I had to drop off my car at the autobody shop and Tod gave me a ride back on his Ducati. When we pulled onto the street I saw a white gov vehicle in the driveway and gov agents talking to our neighbors. I've never even met the neighbors. I don't know why but my first instinct was to tell Tod to keep driving. I ducked my head down to pretend to look for something in my purse. We went to Starbucks, where Tod pointed out a newspaper, something about the NSA. I tried to read the headlines but my paranoia just ran wild. Is that why the white SUV was in my driveway? Is that the same SUV in the parking lot outside this Starbucks? Should I even be writing this stuff down? Went home again and the SUV was gone. Took some meds and realized I hadn't eaten. In the middle of lunch, cops showed up at the kitchen window. Through the window, I could hear them radioing that someone was inside the residence. By someone they meant me. I opened the front door to two agents and an HPD1 officer. They were frightening. The HPD officer searched through the house as Agent Smith asked me about Ed, who'd been due back at work on May 31. The HPD officer said it was suspicious when a workplace reported someone missing before the person's spouse or girlfriend did. He was looking at me like I killed Ed. He was looking around the house for his body. Agent Smith asked if she could see all the computers in the house and that made me angry. I told her she could get a warrant. They left the house but camped out on the corner.

San Diego, 6.8.2013

I got a little afraid that TSA wouldn't let me leave the island. The TVs in the airport were all full of news about the NSA. Once on board the plane, I emailed Agent Smith and the HPD Missing Persons' detective that my grandma was having open heart surgery, requiring me to be off-island for a few weeks. The surgery isn't scheduled until the end of the month and it's in Florida, not San Diego, but this was the only excuse I could think of for getting to the mainland. It was a better excuse than saying, I just need to be with my best friend Sandra and also it's her bday. When the wheels left the ground I fell into a momentary coma of relief. When I landed, I had a raging fever. Sandra picked me up. I hadn't told her anything because my paranoia was off the charts, but she could tell that something was up, that I wasn't just visiting her for her bday. She asked me if Ed and I had broken up. I answered maybe.

6.9.2013

I got a phone call from Tiffany. She asked how I was doing and said she was worried about me. I didn't understand. She got quiet. Then she asked if I'd seen the news. She told me Ed had made a video and was on the homepage of the Huffington Post. Sandra hooked up her laptop to the flat screen. I calmly waited for the 12-minute YouTube video to load. And then there he was. Real. Alive. I was shocked. He looked thin, but he sounded like his old self. The old Ed, confident and strong. Like how he was before this last tough year. This was the man I loved, not the cold distant ghost I'd recently been living with. Sandra hugged me and I didn't know what to say. We stood in silence. We drove out to Sandra's bday bbq, at her cousins' house on this pretty hill south of the city, right on the Mexican border. Gorgeous

place and I could barely see any of it. I was shutting down. Not knowing how to even begin to parse the situation. We arrived to friendly faces that had no clue what I was going through on the inside. Ed, what have you done? How can you come back from this? I was barely present for all the party small talk. My phone was blowing up with calls and texts. Dad. Mom. Wendy. Driving back up to San Diego from the bbq I drove Sandra's cousin's Durango, which Sandra needs this week to move. As we drove, a black gov SUV followed us and a police car pulled Sandra's car over, which was the car I'd come in. I just kept driving the Durango, hoping I knew where I was going because my phone was already dead from all the calls.

6.10.2013

I knew Eileen² was important in local politics, but I didn't know she was also a fucking gangster. She's been taking care of everything. While we were waiting for her contacts to recommend a lawyer, I got a call from the FBI. An agent named Chuck Landowski, who asked me what I was doing in San Diego. Eileen told me to hang up. The agent called back and I picked up, even though Eileen said I shouldn't. Agent Chuck said he didn't want to show up at the house unannounced, so he was just calling "out of courtesy" to tell us that agents were coming. This sent Eileen into overdrive. She's so goddamned tough, it's amazing. She had me leave my phone at the house and we took her car and drove around to think. Eileen got a text from a friend of hers recommending a lawyer, a guy named Jerry Farber, and she handed me her phone and had me call him. A secretary picked up and I told her that my name was Lindsay Mills and I was the girlfriend of Edward Snowden and needed representation. The secretary said, "Oh, let me put you right through." It was funny to hear the recognition in her voice. Jerry picked up the phone and asked how he could help. I told him about the FBI calls and he asked for the agent's name, so he could talk to the feds. While we waited to hear back from Jerry, Eileen suggested we go get burner phones, one to use with family and friends, one to use with Jerry. After the phones, Eileen asked which bank I kept my money at. We drove to the nearest branch and she had me withdraw all of my money immediately in case the feds froze my accounts. I went and took out all my life savings, split between cashier's checks and cash. Eileen insisted I split the money like that and I just followed her instructions. The bank manager asked me what I needed all that cash for and I said, "Life." I really wanted to say STFU, but I decided if I was polite I'd be forgettable. I was concerned that people were going to recognize me since they were showing my face alongside Ed's on the news. When we got out of the bank I asked Eileen how she'd become such an expert at what to do when you're in trouble. She told me, very chill, "You get to know these things, as a woman. Like, you always take the money out of the bank, when you're getting a divorce." We got some Vietnamese takeout and took it back to Eileen's house and ate it on the floor in the upstairs hallway. Eileen and Sandra plugged in their hairdryers and kept them blowing to make noise, as we whispered to each other, just in case they were listening in on us.

Lawyer Jerry called and said we had to meet with the FBI today. Eileen drove us to his office, and on the way she noticed we were being followed. It made no sense. We were going to a meeting to talk to the feds but also the feds were behind us, two SUVs and a Honda Accord without plates. Eileen got the idea that maybe they weren't the FBI. She thought that maybe they were some other agency or even a foreign government, trying to kidnap me.

She started driving fast and erratically, trying to lose them, but every traffic light was turning red just when we approached it. I told her that she was being crazy, she had to slow down. There was a plainclothes agent by the door of Jerry's building, he had gov written all over his face. We went up in the elevator and when the door opened, three men were waiting: two of them were agents, one of them was Jerry. He was the only man who shook hands with me. Jerry told Eileen that she couldn't come with us to the conference room. He'd call her when we were finished. Eileen insisted that she'd wait.

She sat in the lobby with an expression on her face like she was ready to wait for a million years. On the way to the conference room Jerry took me aside and said he'd negotiated "limited immunity," which I said was pretty meaningless, and he didn't disagree. He told me never to lie, and that when I didn't know what to say, I should say IDK and let him talk. Agent Mike had a grin that was a bit too kind, while Agent Leland kept looking at me like I was an experiment and he was studying my reactions. Both of them creeped me out. They started with questions about me that were so basic, it was like they were just trying to show me that they already knew everything about me. Of course they did. That was Ed's point. The gov always knows everything. They had me talk about the last two months, twice, and then when I was finished with the "timeline," Agent Mike asked me to start all over again from the beginning. I said, "The beginning of what?" He said, "Tell me how you met."

6.11.2013

Coming out of the interrogation exhausted, late at night, with days of interrogations ahead of me. They wouldn't tell me how many exactly. Eileen drove us to meet Sandra for dinner at some diner, and as we left Downtown we noticed we still had our tails. Eileen tried to lose them by speeding and making illegal U-turns again, and I begged her to stop. I thought her driving like that just made me look worse. It made me look suspicious. But Eileen is a stubborn mama bear. In the parking lot of the diner, Eileen banged on the windows of the surveillance vehicles and yelled that I was cooperating, so there was no reason for them to be following. It was a little embarrassing, like when your mother sticks up for you in school, but mostly I was just in awe. The nerve to go up to a vehicle with federal agents and tell them off.

Sandra was at a table in the back and we ordered and talked about "media exposure." I was all over the news.

Halfway through dinner, two men walked up to our table. One tall guy in a baseball hat, who had braces, and his partner who was dressed like a guy going clubbing. The tall guy identified himself as Agent Chuck, the agent who'd called me before. He asked to speak with me about "the driving behavior" once we'd finished eating. The moment he said that we decided we were finished. The agents were out in front of the diner. Agent Chuck showed his badge and told me that his main goal was my protection. He said there could be threats against my life. He tapped his jacket and said if there was any danger he would take care of it, because he was on "the armed team." It was all such macho posturing or an attempt to get me to trust him, by putting me in a vulnerable position. He went on to say I was going to be surveilled/followed by the FBI 24/7, for the foreseeable future, and the reckless driving Eileen was doing would not be tolerated. He said agents are never supposed to talk to their assignments but he felt that, given the circumstances, he had to "take the team in this direction for everyone's safety." He handed me a business card with his contact info and said he'd be parked just outside Eileen's house all night, and I should call him if I needed him, or needed anything,

for any reason. He told me I was free to go anywhere (you're damn right, I thought), but that whenever I planned to go anywhere, I should text him. He said, "Open communication will make everything easier." He said, "If you give us a heads-up, you'll be that much safer, I promise."

6.16.2013–6.18.2013

Haven't written for days. I'm so angry that I have to take a deep breath and figure out who and what exactly I'm angry at, because it all just blurs together. Fucking Feds! Exhausting interrogations where they treat me like I'm guilty and follow me everywhere, but what's worse is that they've broken my routine. Usually I'd tear off into the woods and shoot or write, but now I have a surveillance team audience wherever I go. It's like by taking away my energy and time and desire to write, they took away the last little bit of privacy I had. I need to remember everything that's happened. First they had me bring in my laptop and copied the hard drive. They probably put a bunch of bugs on it, too. Then they had copies of all my emails and chats printed out, and they were reading me things I wrote to Ed and things Ed wrote to me and demanding I explain them. The FBI thinks that everything's a code. And sure, in a vacuum anyone's messages look strange. But this is just how people who've been together for eight years communicate! They act like they've never been in a relationship! They were asking questions to try to emotionally exhaust me so that when we returned to "the timeline," my answers would change. They won't accept I know nothing. But still, we keep returning to "the timeline," now with transcripts of all my emails and chats and my online calendar printed out in front of us.

I would expect that gov guys would understand that Ed was always secretive about his work and I had to accept this secrecy to be with him, but they don't. They refuse to. After a while, I just broke down in tears, so the session ended early. Agent Mike and Agent Leland offered to give me a ride back to Eileen's, and before I left, Jerry took me aside and said that the FBI seemed sympathetic. "They seem to have taken a liking to you, especially Mike." He told me to be careful, though, about being too casual on the ride home. "Don't answer any of their questions." The moment we drove away Mike chimed in with, "I'm sure Jerry said not to answer any questions, but I only have a couple." Once Mike got talking, he told me that the FBI office in San Diego had a bet. Apparently, the agents had a pool going to bet how long it would be before the media figured out my location. The winner would get a free martini. Later, Sandra said she had her doubts. "Knowing men," she said, "the bet's about something else."

6.19.2013–6.20.2013

While the rest of the country is coming to grips with the fact that their privacy is being violated, mine's being stripped from me on a whole new level. Both things thanks to Ed. I hate sending Chuck "departure updates," and then I hate myself that I don't have the nerve not to send them. The worst was this one night sending a "departure update" that I'm leaving to meet Sandra and then getting lost on the way but not wanting to stop and ask the agents following me for help, so I was just leading them around in circles. I got to thinking maybe they'd bugged Eileen's car, so I began talking aloud in the car, thinking maybe they could hear me. I wasn't talking, I was cursing them out. I had to pay Jerry, and after I did all I could think about was all the tax money being wasted on just following me to my lawyer's office and the

gym. After the first two days of meetings I'd already run out of the only decent clothes I had, so I went to Macy's. Agents followed me around the women's department. I wondered if they'd come into the fitting room, too, and tell me that looks good, that doesn't, green's not your color. At the fitting room's entrance was a TV blaring the news and I froze when the announcer said "Edward Snowden's girlfriend." I fled the stall, and stood in front of the screen. Watching as my photos flicked by. I whipped out my phone and made the mistake of Googling myself. So many comments labeling me a stripper or whore. None of this is me. Just like the feds, they had already decided who I was.

6.22.2013–6.24.2013

Interrogations over, for now. But a tail still following. I left the house, happy to get back in the air at this local aerial silks studio. Made it to the studio and couldn't find street parking, but my tail did. He had to leave his spot when I drove out of range, so I doubled back and stole his spot. Had a phone call with Wendy, where we both said that however badly Ed hurt us, he did the right thing by trying to ensure that when he was gone, Wendy and I were together. That's why he'd invited her and been so insistent about her coming. He'd wanted us to be together in Hawaii when he went public, so that we could keep each other company and give each other strength and comfort. It's so hard to be angry at someone you love. And even harder to be angry at someone you love and respect for doing the right thing. Wendy and I were both in tears and then we both went quiet. I think we had the same thought, at the same time. How can we talk like normal people when they're eavesdropping on all our calls?

6.25.2013

LAX to HNL. Wore the copper-colored wig to the airport, through security, and throughout the flight. Sandra came with. We grabbed a gross preflight lunch in the food court. More TVs tuned to CNN, still showing Ed, and still surreal, which is the new real for everyone, I think. Got a text from Agent Mike, telling me and Sandra to come see him at Gate 73. Really? He came up to LA from San Diego? Gate 73 was roped off and empty. Mike was sitting waiting for us on a row of chairs. He crossed his legs and showed us he was wearing an ankle pistol. More macho bullshit intimidation. He had paperwork for me to sign in order for the FBI to release Ed's car keys to me in Hawaii. He said two agents would be waiting for us in Honolulu with the key. Other agents would be with us on the flight. He apologized that he wasn't coming personally. Ugh.

6.29.2013

Been packing the house for days now with only minor interruptions from the FBI, coming by with more forms to sign. It's torture, going through everything. Finding all these little things that remind me of him. I'm like a crazy woman, cleaning up, and then just gazing at his side of the bed. More often, though, I find what's missing. What the FBI took. Technology, yes, but also books. What they left behind were footprints, scuff marks on the walls, and dust.

6.30.2013

Waipahu yard sale. Three men responded to Sandra's "take it all, best offer" Craigslisting. They showed up to rummage through Ed's life, his piano, guitar, and weight set. Anything I couldn't bear to live with or afford to ship to the mainland. The men filled their pickup with as much as they could, and then came back for a second load. To my surprise, and I think to

Sandra's, too, I wasn't too bothered by their scavenging. But the moment they were gone, the second time, I lost it.

7.2.2013

Everything got shipped today, except the futons and couch, which I'm just ditching. All that was left of Ed's stuff after the FBI raided the house fit into one small cardboard box. Some photos and his clothes, lots of mismatched socks. Nothing that could be used as evidence in court, just evidence of our life together. Sandra brought some lighter fluid and brought the metal trash can back around to the lanai. I dumped all of Ed's stuff, the photos and clothes, inside, and lit a book of matches on fire and tossed it in. Sandra and I sat around while it burned and the smoke rose into the sky. The glow and the smoke reminded me of the trip I took with Wendy to Kilauea, the volcano on the Big Island. That was just over a month ago, but it feels like years in the past. How could we have known that our own lives were about to erupt? That Volcano Ed was going to destroy everything? But I remember the guide at Kilauea saying that volcanoes are only destructive in the short term. In the long term, they move the world. They create islands, cool the planet, and enrich the soil. Their lava flows uncontrolled and then cools and hardens. The ash they shoot into the air sprinkles down as minerals, which fertilize the earth and make new life grow.